



June, 2009

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## ***Your Dental Health Athletic Mouth Guards***

We are often asked by parents that have children participating in sports if their child needs an athletic mouth guard. We always recommend an athletic mouth guard for anyone participating in any activity that may pose risks of injury to the teeth, jaw and oral soft tissues.

Gone are the days of professional athletes being macho as opposed to being smart. A sign of an athlete's machismo used to be measured by the number of missing teeth, scars or fractures incurred while playing sports which could have been easily avoided by using a "little common sense". Hockey players used to be famous for the number of teeth knocked out while playing. Now, many of that game's most prolific players wear face shields and mouth guards.

There are two main types of mouth guards. One type of mouth guard can be purchased at most sporting good's stores. They become form fitted by placing it in boiling water for 10 seconds and molding into your teeth. This mouth guard is relatively inexpensive. Another type is a "custom made" mouth guard fabricated by your dentist. An impression is taken of the teeth and a mouth guard is custom fitted to one's teeth. This type of mouth guard fits much better and is much more comfortable. In either case, a mouth guard that fits properly is effective in reducing injury to the mouth, teeth and soft tissues.

Mouth guards have also been proven to help reduce the level of concussions or prevent concussions in athletes playing contact sports. The mouth guard can cushion the blow between upper and lower jaws which could significantly reduce the after effects of head injuries.

If you think there could be a possibility of an injury to the face or head during an activity in which you or your children participate, a mouth guard is always a good idea. An ounce of prevention is always worth more than a pound of cure.

Jason Swartz, D.M.D.